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BY WILLIAM R. DE WITT,

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THE LOVE OF CHRIST THE MOTIVE OF MISSIONARY EFFORT.

“The love of Christ constraineth us.”—II. COR., v. 14.

It is only when men feel deeply, that they act with energy. The mere calm intellectual contemplation of an object will avail but little, in calling forth the energies of the soul in untiring action to secure its accomplishment. That object must seize hold upon the heart. It must break up its deep fountains of feeling, and bring the mind under the influence of its high and powerful excitement. Under such an impulse, men have gone forward in the successful prosecution of enterprises, which, to other minds, have appeared embarrassed with difficulties, and encumbered with dangers, that would have rendered every attempt at their accomplishment the effect of childish folly or mad presumption. Superior eminence in any of the pursuits of life has usually been the result of an engrossing passion for that pursuit. No great moral or political revolution was ever achieved, without first awakening an enthusiastic devotion in its behalf.

Though this principle of our nature has been perverted by depravity, and men, under the strong impulse of unholy feeling, have been borne onward, with indomitable energy, in the work of death; yet, in itself, the feature is god-like. Its prototype is found in him, who is the perfection of excellence. It was not the mere calm intellectual contemplation of our apostasy and consequent ruin, that led to the achievement of man's redemption. That achievement, in which has been made the fullest and clearest development of uncreated excellence, which has waked up the strains of the everlasting song, and which will yet fill God's holy kingdom with perfect and eternal blessedness, is the fruit of the throes of infinite love. It is to the strong impulse of this holy affection, that we owe the gift of God's eternal Son; that we are indebted for those scenes of thrilling interest through which he passed during his voluntary exile from Heaven, and for that dark and mighty, though ultimately triumphant conflict, in Gethsemane and on Calvary. It is incarnate love enthroned in Heaven, that now holds the sceptre of

universal dominion ; and with an eye that never sleeps, and an arm that never wearies, is carrying forward to their consummation, the purposes of infinite benevolence. This same affection, with a congruity so characteristic of God, he has made not only the brightest ornament of Christian character, but the impulsive motive to every duty required of us, as his followers. In the lives of the apostles and primitive Christians, we are furnished with the best examples of its power. The love of Christ constrained them.

In the context, the apostle is justifying the conduct of himself, and his fellow laborers, against the cavils of false and mistaken brethren, in the church at Corinth. They had represented their zeal as fanaticism, as the indication of a monomania, that rendered them incompetent to instruct and govern the Church of God, in those periods of peril. The apostle seeks to correct the impressions made by these representations, by stating the principles and the motives that influenced their conduct. Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God ; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause ; for the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge ; that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again. It is, we conceive, of little importance, whether we understand the apostle as referring to the love of Christ for us, or our love to Christ. If the former, it only becomes a motive to devoted effort in his cause, by exciting in our hearts a reciprocal affection. If the latter, (which we think the apostle intended when he penned this passage), it is ever the effect of Christ's love for us.

This affection, my brethren, is the fruit of the Spirit of God ; and springs from a spiritual apprehension of the transcendent glory of the Redeemer's person ; and from a deep sense of individual obligation to Him, for his unmerited mercy. It is an affection which seeks its own nourishment, and grows strong and permanent, by daily meditations on the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary ; and by daily communion with its object at a throne of grace. Such was the affection which reigned in the hearts and governed the lives of the primitive disciples of our Lord ; which bore them onward through trials and persecutions, and led them to count not even their lives dear, in their efforts to bring the world under the holy and peaceful dominion of the Son of God. It was the love of Christ transfusing its purity through their characters, and breathing its sweetness in all their actions, that gave them, under God, their efficiency, and crowned their labors with such abundant success.

It will not then, I trust, be deemed inappropriate to the present occasion, to illustrate in a few particulars, the adaptation of this affection to our holy vocation, especially as called by the providence and the grace of God, to sustain an important agency in sending the Gospel of Christ, as the richest boon of Heaven, to every creature.

I. In the prosecution of this object, I remark in the first place,—that the love of Christ is an *elevating* affection.

The missionary enterprise associates mankind, universally, with the destinies of an immortal existence. The results at which it aims lie above and beyond this world, and reach onward through the ages of eternity. It does, indeed, effect the improvement of their condition in this life. But this is only an incidental good. The great, the ultimate object is, to bring them under an influence from Heaven, that will enlighten and purify their souls, restore them to the knowledge and friendship of God, and prepare them for a deathless existence beyond the grave. This is an object, in which most men feel no interest—for which the world at large has no sympathy. It is as far above the designs of its greatest philanthropists, as the heavens are above the earth; and it can be properly appreciated and successfully prosecuted by those alone, whose views and purposes and feelings have undergone a corresponding elevation. Such an elevation, my brethren, the love of Christ secures, by bringing us into intimate communion with Himself; by destroying, as far as it prevails, every low and selfish purpose; and by identifying our very being with his interests and with his glory.

The tendency of ardent affection is to mould, insensibly, the character to the image of the object loved. It seeks its own gratification in the intimacy of friendship, and dwells with delight on those attributes which have called it into exercise, until the mind yields to their impression. Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, even from glory to glory. While this affection produces this conformity to the image of Christ, it destroys, as far as it prevails, every selfish purpose, and makes us one with him. It identifies our interests with his interests, our glory with his glory. It elevates the thoughts and purposes of the mind above the current of this world's influences, and associates them with the great objects of the mediatorial reign;—with the scenes and the destinies of eternity, in which that reign will be consummated.

Brethren, the relations and the interests of time will ere long terminate for ever. The fashion of this world is passing away; and soon the last ray of its glory will rest upon the bosom of that dark cloud, which comes charged with its final doom. But earth has interests connected with the councils of an eternity that is passed, and with the ages of an eternity to come. Over the ruins of our apostasy, the thoughts of the Son of God lingered, before the foundations of the world were laid, or the heavens were stretched abroad as a curtain. Even then, in anticipation of achieving the redemption of man, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. Immediately on the fall of man he interposed his mediation to arrest the progress of the curse, and to bring the apostate race under a dispensation of mercy, which, in its final consummation, will realize all that infinite benevolence can desire. From that period he has gone forward in the prosecution of his plans. For this the world has been upheld in existence. Empires have risen and fallen. Nations have dashed against nations. The earth has been one scene of wild misrule. But over

this scene the Son of God has presided, ordering and directing all with unerring skill, for the attainment of his own ends. It was not until he had made, by his sacrifice on the cross, an expiation for sin, and thus laid a sure foundation for his eternal kingdom, that his regal dignity was formally assumed and publicly announced. Then, having spoiled principalities and powers, he visibly ascended, in his glorified humanity, to his throne in Heaven. There he now reigns, and will reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet; until he has extended his mild and peaceful sceptre over a redeemed and subjugated world, and accomplished the purposes of infinite benevolence by gathering into his eternal kingdom the multitudes of the saved.

The love of Christ, my brethren, elevates the soul to communion with him in the vast designs of his mediation. He, in whose heart it predominates, is absorbed in the greatness and glory of the achievement. To him it is not less real than sublime. He sees around him the agencies that are now in active operation for its accomplishment, and he anticipates the grandeur of its consummation with unhesitating certainty. The relations and the interests of time are lost sight of, and he regards it as his highest honor to be associated with Christ, though in toil, in suffering, and in reproach, in carrying forward his designs. Such is the elevated spirit of our holy enterprise. Such was the spirit of the Apostles and primitive disciples of our Lord. No one can read their lives without admiring their abstraction from the secular interests that surrounded them, and the vivid impressions of eternal realities under which they lived. Though in the world, they were not of the world. They lived above the current of its influences. They gazed upon the visions of eternity. At Jerusalem, at Athens, or at Rome, surrounded by the imposing ceremonies of their ancient faith, by the proudest monuments of art, by academic groves, or by the splendors of the eternal city, they lost sight of all in the absorbing anticipations of their Redeemer's glory, when he should come to gather into his kingdom the purchase of his blood, and seal up the doom of the lost. Regardless of reproach and toil, they prayed and wept, and entreated men to fly from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life, as though they were listening to hear the sound of the last trumpet, the wailing of the lost, and the triumphant shout of the glorified. Such was the spirit of faith and love that glowed in their bosoms, that elevated them above the world, and bore them on in the duties of their high calling. In proportion as the Church has possessed this spirit, has she enjoyed the blessings of her exalted head, and been honored with success in her efforts to extend his kingdom. May this spirit be ours, brethren, in its largest measure, that we may be prepared to go forward to the achievement of that glorious destiny, to which God is now calling His Church.

II. In the second place, the love of Christ is admirably adapted to the peculiar exigencies of the missionary enterprise, as it is not only an elevating, but also a *self-sacrificing* affection.

It is the nature of love to seek its highest gratification in the happi-

ness of its object. Love lives in the enjoyments it bestows. This is the element of its existence. It delights in occasions of manifesting its strength by the extent of its sacrifices in promoting the good of those that are loved. The eye, brethren, can linger upon nothing more beautiful than the manifestation of this affection. The heart can be subjected to no influence richer in the purest enjoyment. The brightest emanations of deity ever contemplated by created minds, are the out-goings of this affection toward our guilty race, by our Lord Jesus Christ. He loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for our sins. The gift was the most costly that could be bestowed. The treasures of the universe are nothing in comparison with it. To comprehend its magnitude we must comprehend the nature and the resources of the Godhead—for its fulness dwells in him; we must comprehend the infinite delight of his own bosom as he surveyed, from his exalted throne, myriads of holy beings to whom his power had given existence, brightening and exulting in the sunshine of his complacency, pouring forth the song of ecstasy in his praise, and bowing down in solemn adoration at his footstool; and from these celestial heights we must descend through all those stages of deep humiliation, and those scenes of unparalleled sufferings through which he passed, until, on the cross, he exclaimed, it is finished, and bowed his head in death. Though there were seasons when pressed down under his extreme agony, he prayed that if it were possible, the cup of bitterness might pass from him, he knew from the beginning what he must endure. He knew that poverty, toil, reproach, and persecution, would be his constant attendants; that upon him would be poured the fury of the powers of darkness, and the wrath of offended heaven; that, smitten, afflicted, and forsaken of God, he must die in untold agonies on the accursed tree. Yet, such was the strength and devotedness of his love that he willingly came. He delighted to enter upon his work. He pressed forward with holy impatience to the darkest hour of his agony, and bared his own bosom to the sword of eternal justice, that man might be saved. Such, my brethren, is the love of Christ; the grand example, the exalted pattern, after which God will mould, in eternal assimilation to himself, the subjects of his holy kingdom. The minds of the apostles were absorbed in admiration of this love. In their solitary musings it was the subject of their devout meditations. It was the theme, the burthen of their public ministrations. It woke up in their bosoms a reciprocal affection, that sought its highest gratification in pleasing Christ; and rejoiced in occasions of manifesting its strength and devotedness by the greatness of the sacrifice made in behalf of his cause. For Christ they forsook all. They cheerfully suffered the loss of earthly friendships, riches, and honors; and endured poverty, reproach, sufferings and death itself. Nay, they gloried in tribulation, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ. It was the impulsive influence of this self-sacrificing affection that bore them onward from land to land, and from shore to shore, amid perils the most imminent, though the Holy

Ghost bore them witness that bonds and afflictions awaited them wherever they went. But none of these things moved them. No regard for their own personal safety, nor the solicitations of weeping friends, restrained them from pressing forward into thickest dangers where duty called them. They counted not their lives dear unto themselves, that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry they had received from the Lord Jesus.

Brethren, with this spirit of self-devotedness must the Church be deeply embued before she will be prepared to discharge her solemn obligations to her ascended Lord. We cannot do what God requires from us in the conversion of the world, abiding in our sealed houses, enjoying the pleasures and luxuries of wealth and refinement. Nor will we approximate to the measure of our responsibility, by offering up a few prayers for the success of missions, and giving a few dollars of the increase of our substance to aid in sustaining them. The work indeed is the Lord's, and cursed is the man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the living God. But now, as ever, the agencies by which he will accomplish this work, he has entrusted to his Church, and upon her has he imposed the solemn responsibility of employing them, in humble dependence on his blessing. Who, as he surveys the moral condition of the world in the light of God's word—of his promises and commands, and contrasts with it the efforts that have been, or are now making to reclaim it from its guilt and degradation, is not painfully convinced, that the Church, as yet, is far from having any adequate views of the extent of her obligations, or possessing, in any adequate measure, the spirit of her high vocation? If, with her numbers, her wealth, her political and social influence, and the facilities she now enjoys for employing the means ordained of God for the conversion of the world, the Church possessed the same spirit of self-sacrificing devotion to the cause of her Redeemer, which distinguished her primitive members, how soon would she realize the brightest visions of prophecy respecting her future glory! Under the influence of this spirit, ambition and pride and the love of worldly ease and pleasure would disappear. Wealth, now held with a miser's grasp, would be cheerfully consecrated to God. Talent and learning, now devoted to vain speculations in philosophy, and to the bitterness of unhallowed controversy, would be devoted to the affectionate and earnest preaching of the gospel, in the fulness of its blessings. Thousands and tens of thousands of devoted youth would come from the soul-subduing contemplations of the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, with hearts filled with the love of Christ, ready to part with all for his name's sake; to endure toil, suffering, and death itself, if need be, to make known the provisions of eternal love to a perishing world. Then, from united and believing hearts, importunate supplication would continually ascend to the throne of God for the interposition of his almighty arm, and the communications of his Holy Spirit. That arm would then be made bare for salvation, and that Spirit poured out from on high; and the earth would soon be filled with the knowledge and the glory of the Lord.

III. In the third place, another attribute of this affection which commends it, as peculiarly adapted to the missionary enterprise, is, that in its greatest strength, and to whatever sacrifice it prompts, it is a *reasonable* affection.

Though, as has been said, it is only when we feel deeply that we act with energy, yet in order to secure the permanency of such action, our feelings must be sustained by a sound judgment, and meet with an approving response from an enlightened conscience. These are their appointed arbiters; and there are seasons of frequent occurrence in every man's life, however borne forward by strong emotion, when they will vindicate their high prerogatives and sit in judgment on the character of those affections, which excite and control their actions. Unless these affections meet with their decided sanction, there will be misgivings that will cool their fervor, repress their energy, and induce that hesitancy which must ever be fatal to the accomplishment of results embarrassed with difficulties.

The Christian, and especially the Christian missionary, can have none of the excitements to effort, which the world administers to its votaries. To him it is of the utmost importance, that the motives which induce him to enter upon his self-denying, and often perilous career, should be sustained in those seasons of retirement, when, thrown back on his own sober reflections, they undergo the scrutiny of a sound judgment and an enlightened conscience.

The love of power and the prospect of earthly renown, feed the fires of unhallowed ambition, and nerve the soul with energy in the prosecution of difficult and dangerous enterprises. The field of battle is the field of earthly glory. There, amid the perils of the conflict, are displayed those energies of mind, which, with stern composure, control the fury and direct the storm of war; and the proud and haughty bearing of the victor shows that he is conscious of the world's admiration, though he has crushed beneath his feet every sentiment of justice, and every feeling of humanity. But the Christian toils in obscurity. He wastes his energies in unremitted effort to do good, without attracting the notice of the world. He tears himself from home, from kindred, from the sympathies and the privileges of Christian society; goes to unfriendly climes, seeks an abode among the dark and degraded heathen; and, exposed to the most imminent dangers, he toils, and suffers, and dies, that he may bring to them the knowledge of salvation, and direct them in the way of life. But no trumpet heralds his fame. No garlands are wreathed to deck his brow. No festive board is spread as the tribute of admiration for his self-denying deeds of beneficence. Reproach instead of honor, denunciation as a madman or a fool, are the only rewards bestowed by an ungodly and a misjudging world. Even from the bosom of the Church, where he had a right to look for that sympathy and that encouragement which are his sweetest earthly solace, he sometimes meets with a repulsive apathy, far worse than direct opposition. Thus is he thrown for support on his own deep and sober conviction of the reasonableness of the motive by which he has been actuated,

and his confidence of its approval at the bar of God. This conviction, and this confidence, brethren, will not fail to yield their support, if the love of Christ has been the constraining motive. In the hour of its greatest trial, and under the severest scrutiny, it will receive the sanction of reason, and meet with the approving response of conscience. The more calmly the Christian weighs the claims of his Savior, the deeper will be the conviction of his obligation, and the more reasonable will appear that affection which constrains him to withhold nothing, but cheerfully to consecrate his all to his blessed service. In those seasons of sober reflection, it is not what is *given*, but what is *withheld* that troubles an enlightened conscience. To be entirely relieved from perplexing embarrassments, and fears, and doubts; to enjoy the fulness of that liberty with which Christ blesses his people, the heart must let go its hold on everything else, and cling to him in the strength of its love. Then, the conflict between the convictions of duty and the power of selfishness and unbelief, ceases; and there is peace, quietness, and assurance for ever. Never was there a cup of cold water given, from love to him, without its reward: and the greater the sacrifice we make, the more will his consolations abound in the soul. There is no man, that has left house, or parent, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this life, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

With what striking and beautiful illustrations of this truth are we furnished in the biographies of our missionaries. Sometimes, brethren, when I have thought of them as far off, surrounded only by the darkness and degradations of heathenism, suffering every privation, toiling from year to year under every outward discouragement, with no friendly voice to animate them, and no sympathising bosom on which to repose their aching heads in the hour of despondency and gloom;—when I have thought of the delicate, the refined, the enlightened female missionary—the dew of her youth wasted in ceaseless anxieties and unremitted toil;—when I have followed her in my imagination, to some secluded spot to which she is wont to retire, perhaps in the stillness of the evening hour, to think of her home, and to recall the looks and the affections of those from whom she is separated until they meet beyond the vale of death, where parting is unknown; and when I have there witnessed the deep convulsive throes of her heart, while the tears chase each other over her pale and care-worn cheeks;—I have said in my haste, it is *too much*. Can, does God require it? But when I have read of their love for their work, and how their consolations abounded in the midst of their trials;—when I have read of their holy enjoyment in God, of their sweet peace of mind, of their ardent aspirations after heaven, as faith unfolded to their enraptured vision the brightness of its glory;—when I have read of their composed, of their peaceful and triumphant deaths, and thought of the unfading brilliancy of that crown which shall encircle their brows; I have said—it is *not* a vain thing to serve the Lord:—whatever sacrifices it involves, its rewards are infinitely preferable to earth's highest honors and purest pleasures.

IV. In the fourth place, the love of Christ is an affection peculiarly adapted to the exigencies of the missionary enterprise, as it is the bond of union among the followers of the Redeemer, and thus prepares them for efficient co-operation in the advancement of his kingdom.

Union to Christ, and their participation in common, of one spirit from him as their living head, is the only firm and enduring bond of union among his people. To those, thus united to Christ, he is the common foundation on which they all rest, as lively stones, in one spiritual temple. He is the vine to whom all adhere as branches, receiving from Him those vital influences, by which they live, and grow, and bring forth the fruits of righteousness. He is the common object of their faith, their hope and their love. In his cause centres all their interest, and his glory is the end at which they all aim. The one spirit they receive from Christ is pre-eminently the spirit of holy love. It uproots as far as it prevails the pride and selfishness of the human heart. It abolishes private and separate interests, and unites them in cheerful and self-denying efforts to advance the kingdom of their common Savior.

The manifestation of this spirit is among the means ordained of God, to convince men of the divinity of the gospel. It illustrates more than anything visible, its power over the otherwise unconquerable dominion of human depravity; and it demonstrates its heavenly origin by bringing the victims of this depravity from the collisions and strifes of pride, and selfishness, and lust, into one peaceful brotherhood of holy love.

How intensely was the heart of Christ fixed on this union among his people! It was the burden of his petition, in his last prayer for his Church. "Neither," says he, "pray I for these alone, but those also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me."

Can we hope, brethren, for the conversion of the world to God, while the Christian Church presents the spectacle it now does;—organized into various sects, whose separate interests, too often advanced by artifice and slander, are guarded with sleepless vigilance?—While the professed friends of Jesus, instead of combining their efforts to advance the common cause, are marshalling under the banners of party rivalry, and exhausting their strength by mutual hostilities?

At the close of the last century, when Christians first began to unite their efforts for advancing the kingdom of their Redeemer, it seemed to some, in the ardor of Christian hope, as the very dawn of the millennium. "Astonishing spectacle!" said one at that time, "the spell of party is broken; the antipathies of the cradle expire; the strife of ages ceases; and a sweeter harmony of heart and of measures is produced in an hour, than has been granted to the entreaties, the labors, and the prayers of the best men for centuries."* Oh, that this union, so auspi-

* Ser. of Rev. J. M. Mason, preached 1797, before the New York Miss. Society.

ciously commenced, had been permitted to go on until consummated in that blessed result for which the Savior wept and prayed and died! But, alas! after the expiration of nearly half a century, what do we witness, in portions at least, of the Church of Christ? The spell of party and the antipathies of the cradle are revived; the strife of ages is renewed; and the fond anticipations of pious hope are blasted by the bitter animosities and strifes that have been engendered by the ambitious and the violent, who, regardless of the prayer of the Redeemer, have torn asunder the cords of Christian union, and given occasion to the common enemy to glory over the wasted and ruined heritage of God.

Among the fallacies which the arch-deceiver has imposed upon the minds of some, in this divided and weakened condition of the Church, is the *one*, that separate and sectarian action will effect more for the conversion of the world, than the combined efforts of the consecrated host of God. It is unnecessary to suggest even an argument in confutation of a position so at variance with the whole genius and spirit of Christianity, with the dictates of sound discretion, and with the experience of ages. Is it too severe a judgment to affirm in regard to such an opinion, that it is the spirit of party, seeking its own justification by virtually repudiating the magnanimous spirit of Christian love?

There is, brethren, but one remedy for all these evils in the Church of God. It is the love of Christ shed abroad in the hearts of its members by the Holy Ghost given unto them. United to Christ in the bonds of this pure affection, we shall be united to each other. Individual and sectarian feelings and interests will all be merged into that love, which seeketh not her own, but the things of Jesus Christ. Then the prayer of the Redeemer will be answered; and one in affection, one in purpose, and one in effort, the living members of his spiritual body, his Church, will go forth in the spirit of might to accomplish the predicted glory of Zion.

V. In the fifth place, this affection is of the utmost importance in accomplishing the great object of our association, as it involves a spirit of holy dependence on Christ, and of earnest believing prayer for his blessing.

Love is a confiding affection. The Christian in whose heart the love of Christ glows, delights in reposing on the almighty arm of his Savior, and in seeking directly from Him the blessing he desires, and giving Him all the glory in their reception and enjoyment.

It is, my brethren, a question of great practical importance, whether, in this age of comparative zeal and benevolence for the spread of the gospel, there is cherished in the hearts of Christians, that deep sense of dependence on God, and that habit of holy, earnest, believing prayer in secret, which are essential to secure that blessing, without which all the efforts of the Church must be in vain. While there is a beautiful consistency and harmony, according to the economy of grace, between the spirit of unceasing and laborious activity in the cause of Christ, and the spirit of entire dependence on him, and earnest believing prayer;

yet it cannot be disguised, that, owing to the imperfection of Christian character, we need to watch constantly, lest, in the cultivation of the one, we overlook the other. The apostles united both. They gave themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Unceasing and self-sacrificing as were their labors, it was with them a practical truth, that pressed with all its weight upon their hearts, that whosoever planted, and whosoever watered, God must give the increase. They felt, that of themselves they could do nothing—that all the instrumentalities they employed, though mighty through God, to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan, and building up the kingdom of Jesus Christ, were feeble, were weakness itself without his co-operation. With what confidence, then, must they have reposed on the arm of their Almighty Savior, as they girded themselves for the conflict, and went forth to contend not merely against flesh and blood, not merely against the organized forms of evil on earth, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places. With what holy importunity must they have borne on their agonizing hearts, before a throne of grace, the cause of a world perishing in sin. They prayed without ceasing. They continued instant in prayer. They went from their knees to their work, and intermitted that work only to seek the blessing of God, their Redeemer, in prayer. This, unquestionably, was one principal cause of their success. They prayed like Jacob when he wrestled with the Angel of the Covenant, and would not let him go without the blessing. They prayed like Abraham when he plead for Sodom and prevailed with God.

The same spirit of earnest prayer was a striking characteristic of the reformers. The age of the Reformation was an age of mighty intercession with God. And the whole burden of prophecy intimates that the Church will be deeply imbued with this spirit as she enters upon her millennial glory. What can be accomplished, brethren, without the arm of the Almighty? and what can we not achieve if that arm be made bare for salvation? The results that have been already secured are the earnestings of what he is willing to grant. When the people of God, reposing with unlimited and affectionate confidence on the arm of their Almighty Savior, and pressing His throne with their ceaseless supplications, go unitedly forward, in the spirit of self-devotement to the work of their high calling, how soon will they exclaim, in holy astonishment at the result of their own efforts, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?" "Then," says God, "thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and thou shalt be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee. The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."

Finally, brethren, the love of Christ is an affection adapted to the great objects of our association, as it is itself the essential element of successful effort.

"Knowledge is power," is the saying of one of the most gifted of mankind. But a greater than Bacon has taught, and demonstrated, too, that love is power. The author of our being has interwoven with

the very fibres of our existence a strong susceptibility to its influence. Depravity must, indeed, have wrought a fearful ruin in the soul, that is steeled against its impressions in every form. It may be doubted whether such a monster is permitted to live in this world, as yet the scene of moral probation. Before such a consummation takes place, the soul is removed to those dark regions where malignity reigns unrestrained, and despair, with raven wings, broods over its immortal destiny. Go where you will, among the most debased, the outcasts of mankind, and you will find, amid the ruins that sin has effected in their moral natures, there still lingers a chord responsive to the manifestations of goodness. Nay, where reason itself is dethroned, and the darkest images of horror haunt the mind, or maniac rage distorts the features, the love of kindness has subdued the soul to gentleness, and won the heart to confidence and gratitude. It was this that gave to Howard his power over the reckless and the violent. Beneath his look of benignity the heart of the hardened convict relented, and at his voice of kindness the dawn of hope gleamed over the sullen gloom of the desperate in wretchedness. What influence has wrought that wonderful, that almost miraculous reformation, among the inebriates of our land? Our statute books are crowded with penal enactments against the drunkard. Society frowned indignantly upon his vice. The respectable loathed his appearance, and turned him with disgust from their doors. Argument and expostulation were tried in vain, until the friends of temperance, wearied with their fruitless efforts, gave over the confirmed inebriate to a hopeless doom. But love interposed. She sought, with tears of pity, the poor degraded outcast in the dens of pollution and infamy. She took him from the loathsome gutter and addressed him with the voice of kindness. She whispered hope to his heart, inspired him with confidence, and thus redeemed him from his degradation and restored him to respectability and usefulness.

Amid the ruins of the fall, the susceptibility to the power of love remains in the human soul, to save it, by the grace of God, from utter abandonment, and bring it back again, under the dominion of holiness, that it may eventually be prepared for the purity and the bliss of heaven. It has not with more eloquence than truth been observed, that, "God, who knew what was in man, seems to have known that in his dark bosom there was but one solitary hold that he had on him, and that to reach it he must put on a look of graciousness, and tell us he had no pleasure in our death, and manifest toward us the longings of a bereaved parent, and even to humble himself into a suppliant in the cause of our return, and bid his messengers bear, through all their habitations, the tidings of his good will to the children of men.—And now that every barrier which lay across the path of acceptance is levelled by the power of Him who travailed in the greatness of his strength for us, is the voice of a friendly and beseeching God, lifted up without reserve in the hearing of us all; and this one mighty principle of attraction is brought to bear upon our natures, that might have remained sullen and unmoved under every other application."^{*} And, brethren, with a congruity so

* Dr. Chalmers.

like God, he has entrusted the publication of his loving kindness not to angels' lips of burning eloquence, but to the children of depravity and wretchedness, whose hearts have been won and subdued and blessed by the power of this love, that from the fulness of their own experience they might testify of its truth and richness to their brethren in depravity and wretchedness. Then it is, when subdued and burdened with a sense of their personal obligation to their Savior, they go, as redeemed sinners, to speak of his infinite goodness, to commend him as the hope of the guilty and the wretched, and urge them with tears of tenderness and love to confide in his mercy ;—then it is, that their words find their way to the hearts of their hearers, subdue them to penitence, warm them into love, excite them to confidence in God, and fill them with holy peace. And when the hearts of the ministers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ are bathed in the pure fountain of a Savior's love, when they live, and pray, and preach, and labor, under its constraining influences, it will not be long before, from the mount of God, they rejoice with joy unspeakable over a redeemed and regenerated world.

If these things be so, beloved brethren ; if I have not unduly estimated the importance and adaptation of this holy affection to our high vocation—especially as called by the providence and grace of God—to sustain an important agency in sending the gospel to every creature, then it only remains that I urge you, not forgetting my own obligations, to cultivate this holy affection. How numerous and how solemn the motives that press upon us this duty ! The claims of that Savior who loved us, and gave himself for us ; the vows we have made before God and man ; the condition of a perishing world ; the signs of the times ; the shortness of life ; the approaching retributions of eternity, and the importance of being fully qualified to achieve, under God, the high destiny to which we are individually called—all, all urge us to cherish the love of Christ in our hearts, as the controlling motive of our lives, and to devote ourselves unceasingly to the advancement of his kingdom.

Brethren, there is one thought connected with this subject to which, I trust, the occasion will justify me in alluding. We are not left without the most delightful examples of the power of this sacred love to incite us to its cultivation : and the place where we are now assembled, on this return of our Anniversary, brings to our remembrance the names of many* who here imbibed this spirit, until, constrained by it, they tore themselves away from their weeping friends and kindred, to go and carry to the benighted heathen the tidings of salvation. There are few places where we could meet with so many hearts, connected by the most tender recollections, and the most solemn associations, with our holy enterprise. There are many here, honored of God, who have resigned the cherished objects of their fondest earthly love to the claims of Christ and the

* The city of Norwich and its immediate vicinity has furnished twenty-eight missionaries for the heathen.

heathen. Some of these are now in the field of labor, bearing with cheerfulness the burden and heat of the day; while others, having finished their work, have been called to their reward in Heaven. The very places consecrated by the prayers and tears of these devoted servants of God, where, constrained by a Savior's love, they first gave themselves to the cause of Missions, are full of interest. Around these places we could linger, musing on their bright example, until we caught a portion of their spirit, and were excited to emulate their devotedness.

But, Brethren, there are places and scenes of far deeper interest, that invite our attention. It is among the deep shades of Gethsemane, and at the foot of the cross on Calvary, that we must linger, and meditate, and pray. It is here, in the contemplation of the love of Christ for us—a love, the height, the depth, the length and the breadth of which, no finite mind can measure, that we must learn to estimate the extent of our obligations, and imbibe the spirit which will prepare us to act our parts in achieving the vast results of his mediatorial reign. Toils and sufferings, in the prosecution of our work, may be ours. We may not see what our eyes long to see, before our lips are sealed in death, and our bodies descend into the grave. But the kingdom of the Redeemer shall be triumphant. The diadem of the nations shall adorn his brow. At his feet shall bow a ransomed world; and in the day of his glory, among the myriads of the blessed as they ascend, with the shout of triumph, to the kingdom prepared for them from the foundations of the world, shall all appear who have here yielded their hearts to the constraining influences of his love.

SERMON CCCXXXVI.

BY REV. THOMAS E. VERMILYE, D.D.,

COLLEGIATE PASTOR OF THE REFORMED PROTESTANT DUTCH CHURCH,
NEW YORK.

THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION OF THE YOUNG.

"And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—II. TIMOTHY, III., 15.

THERE is probably no portion of the writings of the Apostle Paul, in which his character is exhibited to the attentive reader in a more interesting light, than in his letters to his youthful friends and fellow-labourers Titus and Timothy. In other epistles we perceive, indeed, and admire the peerless majesty of his mind, dilated and ennobled by the operations of the truth: the glow of his heart touched and purified by the influences of the Holy Ghost. In some we mark the surprising acuteness and force of his reasoning powers, and in others we are carried onward by the resistless flow of the richest and most impressive eloquence. We are subdued by his strength, captivated by his beauty, or awed by his sublimity; and are compelled to feel that our thoughts and sensibilities are under the control of a spirit of no ordinary mould.

But in his epistles to Titus and Timothy, he appears in circumstances somewhat different. He is writing, in all the freedom of confiding friendship, to individuals; and they the seals of his own ministry and the beloved companions of his privations and toils. They were, moreover, *young* disciples, who looked to him for counsel and instruction, and for whom he felt a strong solicitude that they should well acquit themselves of their holy charge. Accordingly, we here observe a new and rare assemblage of virtues. The mightiness of his intellect and the warmth of his affections so united, the separate features of each so admirably blended, the colors so richly mingled, as to present a portraiture the most lovely and attractive. Here is exhibited a friendship sincere and ardent, in which age allies itself with youth: yet is it age gracefully laying aside every appearance of severity or assertion of dignity, while it opens the stores of sanctified wisdom, and exhorts and counsels and encourages "with all long-suffering and gentleness." With

what ineffable tenderness does Paul the Aged, "now ready to be offered," address himself to Timothy, *his own son* in the faith? How strong must have been the tie that bound him to the youth of his prayers and hopes, and with whom he now entrusts the ministry of the faithful word, as he himself is about to retire from the scene? With what undissembled satisfaction does he "call to remembrance the unfeigned faith which dwelt in him," and which he might be almost said to have inherited? And with what solemn and affecting emphasis does he "charge him before God and the Lord Jesus Christ" to a holy consecration as a believer and to renewed devotion as a minister of the blessed gospel?

Timothy had enjoyed singular advantages for pious education. From childhood he had been diligently taught in "the Holy Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation." And the progress he had made in divine things, the faith, the love, the purity he displayed, the Apostle more than intimated to have been the sanctified effects of that early instruction and care he had received from his "grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice." The mature fruits had bountifully repaid their wise and prayerful culture.

From this pleasing example, recorded and perpetuated with Apostolic commendation, I design to gather a few remarks aiming to point out the importance of early inculcating a regard for the Bible and its truth upon the young: and the encouragement they have to persevere who are called in Providence to engage in this work. My remarks, as is expected on this occasion, will be directed more especially to parents and to teachers of Sabbath Schools.

I. In regard to the duty and importance of carefully imbuing the youthful mind with a proper estimate of the Holy Scriptures, various considerations arise to enforce it, if indeed on such a point any proof or reasonings be required or even admissible. Perhaps in this, as in a multitude of other cases, it is not so needful that truth and duty should be made plain by argument, as that it should be rendered impressive by repetition: and that our minds should be stirred up by way of remembrance. With this view, therefore, I would observe,

1. That the Scriptures are God's word, presenting a peculiar claim from that fact as well as from the nature of their contents to the devout attention of all to whom they are addressed. They are "the Holy Scriptures," and should therefore be received with holy fear. They have been sent down from the throne above by divine benevolence, and speak with the voice and authority of God to a sinful world. This is the roll written full within and without with the characters of celestial wisdom and love, effulgent with the lustre of high divinity, discovering to us the counsels of the Most High; and it is the single and only communication of the kind he has ever made or ever will make for the instruction and comfort of wanderers from the way of life. It is not a document interesting from its peculiarity, or curious from its antiquity merely, but we possess, we handle a volume that has claims with which no other single volume nor all others united can compare. It is *THE BOOK*; the golden epistle from the court of our Sovereign;

and "whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed." To contemn a king's edict is an affront offered to majesty itself: and to slight the written word is to slight him whose stamp it bears. It is to forfeit all the mercies it proffers and to incur all the evils it denounces. Believing it then to bear this character, that God speaks in every line, what reverence becomes us when we take it in hand, what solicitude and care that we may not seem to despise its author. If the followers of the false Prophet pay an almost religious homage to a single leaf of the Koran that may casually meet their eye, shall we display less reverence for the word that is spirit and that is life? I esteem it all important that this sentiment should be instilled into the minds of the young at an early period, and that it should be fostered with the utmost diligence and tenderness, that so it may ripen into the habitual frame of their spirits. And I may add, not for the Bible alone, but for religious things in general, for all sacred ordinances and observances should reverence be inculcated upon them, as one powerful means by which conscience may be kept tender, and their feet be preserved from the paths of the destroyer. Surely nothing is more affecting, while nothing is more foul and offensive than to behold youth hardened against the impressions of seriousness and early daring to despise things sacred as well as profane. The Bible and religious themes are never likely to profit their souls; nor can it be hoped that civil authority or parental restraint will continue long to be respected, if in opening years the fear of God has been cast away from them, and conscience is already so far seared that it suffers no shock from a rude or light treatment of that which is heaven's last, peculiar gift.—Do not say that the course I recommend would pre-occupy the mind with mere prejudice and encourage bigotry that shuns reflection and research. I would indeed pre-occupy their minds: but it should be with affectionate reverence for a treasury that contains the things that belong to their peace. I would make them feel that it is too solemn for a jest, too true and momentous to be lightly cast aside. I would strive to fortify them against the seductive voice of earthly blandishments, against the whispered insinuations or open revilings of the unbeliever, by entwining veneration most profound for the lively oracles with their infantine associations, and making them feel that to bow with subjection where God hath spoken, is the perfection of human reason. Said an eminent statesman of our country, who had been exposed to the fury of that tempest with which infidelity many years ago desolated the world, "I should have been an infidel, if I could have forgotten how my mother in infancy taught me the Lord's Prayer." So the impression fixed in the minds of our children, that the book to which they were drawn by a mother's love, which they were accustomed to see in a father's hand at the morning and evening oblation, is the very word of God, may become the means of preserving them from much speculative and practical impiety. And in a day like the present, when truly the foundations are out of course, particularly would I desire as a first point, that this idea may pervade all their thoughts and feelings in

relation to the Sacred Scriptures; that it may be inwrought, as it were, with the fibres of their minds, to grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength: that something may be stable in their apprehensions while all else is in commotion, something august while all beside that was esteemed venerable is disregarded, something sacred amidst abounding profanity, something hopeful of heaven amidst the wrecks and woes and tears of this sinful earth.

2. The importance of this duty also appears when we open the sacred volume and observe its contents. It is eminently a book of principles; and they the most pure and elevated for the formation of the character: of precepts the most distinct and appropriate, and at the same time the most penetrating, for the government of the temper and the direction of the life. It does not, like almost all human systems of ethics, mislead the mind by exaggerated representations of the purity and dignity of man without a recognition of his fallen estate, by flattering his pride with notions of innate perfection unsullied, of inherent power undisturbed by the fact of deep depravity: it does not lead him to misconceive the end of his being by confining his thoughts to the world, nor present a partial and inadequate view of his duties by overlooking his relations to God and eternity, through an absorbing attention to time and to man. Its principles are grand and wide-reaching, its precepts adapted to his wants wherever he touches life about him or ascends to God above him. Search when you will through the stores of ages, but from no source can you draw maxims so clear, so apposite, so pervading. The vain boasting of the disputers of this world is put to shame, the accumulated wisdom of heathen moralists sinks into insignificance before the sublime teachings of this moralist of the skies; and its lessons moreover are imparted in a form and manner fitted especially to allure and impress the young. By historical details and examples, by simple delineations of individual characters which illustrate principles, by vivid pictures of domestic scenes and every-day life, by the finest descriptions and inimitable strokes of beauty and pathos, by poetry and narrative, they engage all the thoughts and distil their sweetness into the heart. The parent or teacher must possess little skill indeed, who cannot with such aids as the Scriptures abundantly supply, awaken the curiosity of a child and interest while he instructs his mind.

3. But we may rise still higher. From the Scriptures alone can we obtain a knowledge of "the true and perfect doctrine of SALVATION;" of the grand fact that there is forgiveness with God for the sins of men, and of the way by which it may be enjoyed. The necessities of the soul are here eminently consulted. They are the authorized sources of the highest and most essential knowledge. They alone "are able to make wise unto salvation." There the character of that holy and sovereign God with whom we have to do, the nature of his government over moral creatures, the righteous requirements of his law, are revealed. There our own sinfulness, with its dreadful and certain consequences, is displayed: the deceitful workings, the entire depravity

of the human heart are affectingly exhibited. There is unfolded the way of life through the redemption by Jesus Christ: the excellence and sufficiency of his mediatorial work, and the mode of its application to purify the guilty conscience. There the Spirit's office and agency are distinctly set forth: our dependence on the one hand and our duties on the other: the way of escape from the perdition of hell, the way to attain the ineffable glories of heaven. By instruction and argument, by persuasion and warnings, by motives various and tender, are we entreated to forsake the course of sin, and choose and walk in the way of life. These teachings we truly need; they are applicable to the life that now is as well as that which is to come; they are adapted to every age and condition, and where else will you go to find them? The Scriptures alone are the crystal fountain whence flow the waters of the river of life. They alone are adapted to our real necessities. They can alone refresh the soul parched and athirst in a land of weariness and great drought. No other source of knowledge, no other study or pursuit, will meet the wants of our condition, the cravings of the mind after pure and permanent bliss. And if we really believe this, that these are things committed to us and to our children, in which their immortal interests as well as our own are concerned, can we hesitate whether it is our duty to teach, whether it is important that they should learn them. We may furnish and adorn their minds with much besides; we may invest their persons with the outward charms of polished gracefulness, we may endow them with wealth—the fruit of strenuous toil—but if they be still destitute of the inward adorning of the heart, what shall it profit? In that day when God shall come to take the soul, what shall it profit? If we would not only enjoy the benefits the Gospel confers ourselves, but desire that our children also may enjoy them, plainly should we instil into their early thoughts the wisdom which the Holy Ghost teacheth. Nor, when we neglect this duty, can we reasonably expect that in after-life our children should possess great familiarity with the Scriptures, be rooted and grounded in the truth, be imbued with its spirit and taste largely of its consolations. It were as if we should anticipate a bountiful crop when the soil has not been prepared and when no seed has been sown.—We may not indeed promise that in every instance our toil shall be repaid with speedy and abundant success: yet have we reason to believe that the good seed of the kingdom shall not be lost. He that soweth, soweth in hope. But surely we are not authorized by any analogies in the natural or spiritual world, to expect large results where we have bestowed little or no culture. At this point there is a strange and culpable remissness chargeable upon many Christian parents. The subject does not lie upon their minds with sufficient weight, nor do they ponder it in their hearts. Instead of making it a matter of conscience, cherishing the sense of solemn obligation, and prayerfully seeking divine guidance and success, often they are indifferent: satisfied if they can shift the burden upon others, ministers or sabbath-school instructors, very readily taking it for granted that they perform the task. Or if

they attempt it themselves, it is in a manner hurried and unconcerned, so as to awaken no interest in the mind of the child, and of course so as to preclude deep impression or lasting benefit. And yet they wonder that children brought up amidst Bibles and taken to the house of God should display such ungodly tempers, or run to such excess of evil. The painful fact is sometimes observed, it is true, in children of pious parents, and when religious instruction has been carefully given, so that they are not chargeable with gross dereliction of duty. Yet it is without doubt true, that in most instances of the kind, the result is to be attributed to some parental mismanagement which unhappily defeated the end of instruction, if that instruction has been given. But let the duty be properly discharged, and although we may not dictate to a sovereign lord with regard to the conversion and salvation of our offspring, we may yet hope in a promising God who has said that "the children of his servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before him."

4. But this duty is also one of express scriptural inculcation: "Train up a child in the way in which he should go." To which is annexed the promise that "when he is old he will not depart from it." God speaks of his statutes to Israel, as the "Commandments which I command thee, thou and thy son and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged." "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up." Surely the claims of the New Testament are not less imperative, its teachings less important, and the subject therefore comes home with all the force of a divine command. Paul recognizes the duty and its happy effects in the case of the youthful Timothy.

It is proper here to notice a singular perversion of common sense, as well as a most unbecoming slight to the word of God and the souls of their children, of which some parents are guilty. Under the plea of prudence, deference to the sacred rights of conscience, and similar considerations, they seek to justify themselves for abstaining from all interference in the matter; at least from authoritative and particular activity. Thus they fear their children may become disgusted with religion, should they insist that the Bible and religious books shall be studied by them; and the more so as there are deep things here, which their tender minds cannot comprehend. How early a child may comprehend enough of the truth to become the means of renewing and sanctifying the heart we cannot tell. But many recorded instances are there for the encouragement of faith and to quicken our diligence, of such as at an infant age have shown that they knew and embraced Jesus their Savior. What reason have we to suppose that he, who when upon earth, with a benignity all his own, took little children in his arms and blessed them, will not from heaven impart to them his grace? Why should we fear they will become disgusted with religion if properly dealt with? And if improperly, they may become disgusted with anything.

But religion is a subject so solemn and mysterious, so deep and difficult, they think it best not to interfere. There are so many and such various schemes, that they will not assume the responsibility of deciding the case, and forestalling the minds of their children by a set creed. That is a matter of which each should be left free to judge for himself. We venture to affirm that of such reasoning the glaring absurdity would be in a moment perceived, if employed on any other subject than religion, and would be too shocking to be uttered. Because creeds may vary, the interpretations of men may differ, therefore the young may not study God's word. Because religion is a most solemn thing—so solemn that without true religion the soul is lost—therefore their children shall have nothing to do with it. Did ever parent act on such a principle in the worldly education of his offspring? Does any so reason respecting human science? But remember, if you will exclude religion, you cannot exclude irreligion. They will learn: nor need you be surprised, if, where such maxims and conduct are observed, they should learn to despise and reject all religion. If you should behold them seated in the chair of the scorner, do not marvel.—Besides, this extreme sensitiveness is partial; this peculiar liberality which would debar religious instruction, and hold the minds of youth perfectly unoccupied with a creed, is not fairly carried out until you have reduced them to the condition of absolute heathen. For only by a complete separation from Bibles and Sanctuaries and Sabbaths, and all religious observances, could you be assured they would receive no bias. Moreover, they are in the midst of a community where these things are themes of conversation, and they may thus receive some impression. They may hear there is a God, and be told there is a heaven—a hell; that they have souls to be saved, or to be lost. And what then? Away with such impious folly! Be assured that while you are thus sensitive and reserved in implanting the seeds of religion, error and impiety will strike deep their roots, and produce their bitter harvest. Is the youth furnished, as a feeling heart would desire, for the business, the temptations, the snares of the world, who has no fixed religious principles? Or are the truths of the Bible, its sublime doctrines, its comforting promises, its glorious hopes, of so little moment to the man, that the youth can well afford to be without them?

II. Let us turn to notice some of the grounds of *encouragement* to the faithful discharge of the duty we have been considering. For although as far as parents and especially Christian parents are concerned, the inestimable value to their offspring of the instruction to be imparted, in connection with the fact that their diligent care is an undoubted duty, made apparent from the teachings and spirit of the Bible, may be all-sufficient; yet in this as in other instances our gracious Lord has combined hope with effort: something greatly to encourage the heart, while in the performance of duty.

1. In the first place then, from the very nature of the case, we may reasonably anticipate a large share of success, and the happiest results from such work of faith and labor of love. And in every employment

the fair prospect of success stimulates activity and sweetens toil. Remember that youth is of all the seasons of life the best in which to make impressions : in which they are most readily produced and take the firmest hold upon the mind. Man may, in a very important sense, be called a creature of education. He is usually in his tastes and habits, in his modes of thinking and acting, in his moral sentiments and sensibilities in mature life, very much what the influences exerted upon him in youth, in childhood, even in the nursery and the cradle, were adapted to make him. The instances are rare and remarkable indeed, if ever they occur, in which he so entirely emancipates himself from these, that no trace of their power can be afterwards discerned. The thought is solemn truly, and full of admonition, but it is also consolatory. For if to your hands is committed the moulding of character, the formation of mental and moral habitudes, the period is most favorable, and the materials on which you operate are pliable. Like the softened wax, as they easily receive, so will they retain almost any impression you may give. Then the mind is inquisitive and alert. Curiosity is all awake. The eye is vigilant and observation keen, the ear open catching every sound, and the various faculties prompt to their functions, intently fulfilling the great law of their being, to seek and to know.—The memory is ready and retentive ; and if stored with Bible truths will faithfully preserve them. And what if that they read be not fully understood ? It is so with yourselves. It is so in regard to every science. It is the condition of our present state in all relations to “ know but in part.” Yet we may not therefore withhold the materials which may be intelligently applied when the judgment ripens.—The affections also are in youth more tender and susceptible than in after-years. The heart less occupied with corroding cares, less contaminated by evil example, is comparatively easy of access, which afterwards may become harder than the nether mill-stone. All the circumstances of the case invite you in the morning to sow the seed of spiritual and eternal good. And since it is certain that at this period you cannot prevent them from contact with evil, from all connection with the vicious around them, as they are necessarily and actively undergoing the process of education, as their faculties and dispositions are in a course of rapid development under the influences which press upon them on every side, the question is whether you will be at the pains of instilling the gospel into their minds, and as far as possible fortifying them against temptation by its sentiment and spirit, or whether you well negligently lose the most promising opportunity and the best advantages for giving a holy direction to their whole future life.

2. We are encouraged by special and gracious promises. Indeed the young seem to share very largely in covenant provisions, and to be regarded in Scripture with a special and peculiar interest. The tender and considerate Savior has not repressed the yearnings of the parental heart. The God who has constituted the relation has not frowned upon the strong crying and tears with which we supplicate that our children may live before him. “ Children are the heritage of the Lord.” They

are his property. And where his venerable name has been named upon them, where they have been remembered before him in many prayers, and instructed from his word in the spirit of faith, he who said "I will be thy God," with infinite compassion, has condescended to add, "And the God of thy seed after thee." "His faithfulness is unto all generations." "His righteousness is unto children's children." Throughout their career, he will not be unmindful of them, nor withdraw his protecting hand. And if in the giddiness of youth, or amidst absorbing cares and alluring objects to which manhood is exposed, passion may hurry them away from the path of rectitude, yet the seed sown is there, and he will water it. Amidst their wanderings he will recollect whose they are. He will observe the seal upon their foreheads. The toilsome culture of years gone by, the prayers from lips that may have long mouldered in the dust, shall come up in memorial before him, and return in showers of grace. May we not hope it? Is it not enough in accordance with his spiritual Providence to give animation to our exertions?

3. Finally, there is encouragement from the manifest blessings which do attend such labors. Of the many instances of engaged piety on record in every age, it surely is not affirming too much to say that the great majority were such as had enjoyed the benefits of a religious education. Where they attained to special eminence and became shining lights in the world, it was because of a special discipline. The annals of piety are replete with examples. I am persuaded, moreover, that if we should trace back the history of the Church at large with reference to this particular, we should discover that her ranks had been replenished, her numbers augmented in Christian lands, chiefly from among those who were either the children of pious parents, or had been nurtured where the dews of Bible truths were distilled around and upon them. How emphatic and encouraging such a fact! Nor ought it to be overlooked that in the revivals of religion which have so widely spread over the land, a very large proportion of those who became the subjects of a hopeful change and have subsequently adorned their profession, have come from the same class. In the family circle, in the sabbath school, under catechetical instruction, (which, however, has to a lamentable extent fallen into disuse), they became prepared, if we may so speak, to acknowledge the force of truth and exemplify the power of godliness. God has said that there shall be a seed to serve him in every generation. And by such means, when the aged have been withdrawn, the children have been qualified to stand in their places. The babes in Christ have become mature in grace. Multitudes of them, under proper training, have passed into the communion of the Church on earth, and have honored her ordinances: and multitudes have been translated in full hope, to shine in the realms of light.

The subject claims, in application, the serious consideration of youth themselves. The advantages you enjoy are truly great; and we are not left to doubt that by the means of moral and spiritual improvement which a bountiful God has bestowed, he designs not only to bless you

individually, but to prepare a seed to serve him in the coming ages of his Church. Yet to reap the blessing, to be useful, reflect that much, very much depends upon yourselves. Timothy was a holy man and an able minister, because he had been an apt and attentive scholar. Ask yourselves seriously, what am I the better for all the means of knowledge and grace I have so fully enjoyed? And oh! let not your greater mercies increase the woes of final and everlasting condemnation.

Let parents also lay these things to heart. They will, it is to be presumed, acknowledge the importance of the subject, and may observe that they have delightful encouragement to faithful and persevering effort. Their own best hopes in regard to their children, the hopes of the Church, the hopes of the world, are most intimately connected with family religion, and especially with Bible instruction and Bible influence brought to bear upon the opening mind in that hallowed sphere, the domestic scene. Mothers, here is your retired but momentous province. Here you wield a power that, if rightly exerted, will be felt in widening circles, and will pass on and transmit its benefits to generations yet unborn. From your hand will come forth many young Timothies, who from childhood have known the Holy Scriptures, and have been prepared to adorn and bless their age. How solemn the responsibility! Yet how delightful the work! How honorable and beautiful the tribute which Scripture and history unite in paying to maternal influence. Theirs is the noble, enviable office of forming the character in its earliest development. Need we ask a father's or a mother's heart, if aught shall be wanting on their part to form it for truth, for virtue, for holiness, for heaven.

To sabbath-school teachers, a single word—your employment is arduous, but it is promising. It is responsible, but it is full of consolation. Let the past animate you: the obvious blessing of God upon this mode of doing good: the cheering fact that so many who have been trained in these institutions have been already gathered into the Church, like sheaves from the harvest, let this ever give warmth to your hearts, and energy to your service; since you need not fear that you will labor in vain, and spend your strength for naught. No good work, as yours eminently is, undertaken and prosecuted in the spirit of faith and prayer, will be suffered to pass without a blessing. Go on, diligent and hopeful. He whom you seek to honor, will in due season own and reward your toil.